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Spacecraft to Fly Past Venus Weeks After Signs of Life Detected in Planet's Atmosphere  
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

A spacecraft with the intended destination of Mercury is expected to make a close flyby of Venus in mid-October, providing scientists with the chance to gather additional information to back up recent revelations that the distant planet may in fact harbor life.

The spacecraft in question - BepiColombo - is part of a joint international project between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency. The craft's mission is intended to study Mercury's composition, geophysics, atmosphere, magnetosphere and overall history.

Although BepiColombo may provide scientists with a vast amount of information on Mercury in a few years' time, the space mission will be able to give officials further insight into Venus sooner, since the craft will have to conduct two Venus flybys as it attempts to use the planet's gravitational pull to curb its speed before heading to Mercury.

According to the ESA, the first of the two flybys is expected to take place on October 15.

Although the date of the second flyby is yet to be officially confirmed, a tentative date of August 10, 2021, has been noted.

While the agency has already indicated that the instruments aboard BepiColombo have been designed to specifically function for Mercury's environment, the ESA has stated that the mission still has the capabilities to [possibly investigate Venus' atmosphere and ionosphere](#).

"It's kind of perfect timing," Jörn Helbert, whose team from the German Aerospace Center helps to manage instruments on the ESA's orbiter, [told Forbes](#). "We are now seeing if our sensitivity is good enough to do observations."

Helbert told the outlet that he believes the Mercury Radiometer and Thermal Imaging Spectrometer (MERTIS) device aboard ESA's orbiter would be best at studying Venus' atmosphere, but that ultimately there is still a possibility that it may not be successful, since the device was made for Mercury and will be at a distance of over 6,200 miles from Venus. However, the second flyby, which will place the BepiColombo at a distance of about 340 miles from the planet, may prove much more fruitful, Helbert said. And on the chance that it's a success, MERTIS will likely be able to confirm whether phosphine gas, potentially a sign of microbial life, exists on Venus.

The agency would have to get "very, very lucky" to detect phosphine on Venus during the first flyby, Helbert said.

An international team of researchers stunned many in the science communities earlier this week after they announced that they'd discovered potential signs of life on Venus. Their study, which was [published September 14 in the journal Nature Astronomy](#), detailed that traces of phosphine had been spotted in Venus' hazy, yellow clouds.

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#### Silly Bernese Mountain Dog Refuses to Leave Aussie Beach - Video Club

Mack, a Bernese mountain dog living his best life in Australia, recently proved humans aren't the only ones who can throw down a solid tantrum when they don't want to do something - especially when it involves leaving the joys of beach life behind.

Video shared with video licensor Storyful captures the silly pup immediately tossing himself to the ground and remaining motionless upon realizing that the fun has ceased, and that the trip to the beach in the suburbs of Adelaide is over.

"He has 'tantrums' whenever we are leaving a walk or if he sees my car or hears me unlock it because he doesn't want to go home," Jo Templin, Mack's mum, [told Storyful](#). "He throws down, rolls on his back and won't get up."

Luckily for Mack, the protest worked, and he managed to get an extra 30 minutes at the beach, Templin admitted. Somebody get this pooch an Oscar for his acting chops!

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#### US Police Sought 'Heat Ray' to Use Against White House Protesters Prior to Trump Bible Photo-Op by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

According to recently released testimony, US military police tried to obtain a slew of weapons from local national guardsmen as they prepared to assault peaceful protesters outside the White House on June 1, including a "heat ray" that induces the feeling of boiling skin.

As police in Washington, DC, [moved to disperse peaceful protesters in Lafayette Park on June 1](#) prior to a photo op outside a church by US President Donald Trump, they unleashed a slew of weapons [including tear gas, "stinger" grenades and rubber bullets](#). However, according to recently released testimony by Maj. Adam DeMarco of the DC National Guard, military police sought some even more powerful weapons, including the Active Denial System (ADS), or so-called "heat ray."

The revelation comes from DeMarco's July testimony to the House Natural Resources Committee, which is investigating the Lafayette Park incident. [The testimony was obtained by the Washington Post on Wednesday](#).

According to the Post, an email from the National Capital Region's lead military police official said the ADS "can provide our troops a capacity they currently do not have, the ability to reach



out and engage potential adversaries at distances well beyond small arms range, and in a safe, effective, and nonlethal manner.”

DeMarco’s testimony also revealed that a stockpile of M4 carbines - special assault rifles adapted from the M16 for use by special forces - was shipped from Virginia’s Fort Belvoir to the DC Armory on June 1, followed by roughly 7,000 rounds of 5.56-millimeter and 7.62-millimeter ammunition.

The dispersal was the beginning of a night of violent crackdowns on demonstrations across the US’ capital city in which police cornered dozens of protesters in a narrow side-street and tear-gassed them and [national guardsmen “buzzed” protesters with helicopters](#) by flying just 50 feet over their heads. The protests were part of a crescendo of nationwide demonstrations against racism and police violence sparked by the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, at the hands of Minnesota’s Minneapolis Police Department.

[According to the Pentagon’s non-lethal weapons program](#), the ADS broadcasts “a very short duration focused beam of millimeter waves at a frequency of 95 gigahertz” that “provides a quick and reversible skin surface heating sensation that does not penetrate into the target.” This is much more powerful than a microwave oven, but according to the Pentagon, “the associated directed energy wavelength is very short and only physically capable of reaching a skin depth of about 1/64 of an inch.”

“This weapon is battlefield technology,” the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, a constitutional rights nonprofit group [in Washington, DC, tweeted on Wednesday](#). “Deployed in Afghanistan but withdrawn. But clearly some in the Pentagon and the Trump Admin view Americans engaged in protest the way they view enemy combatants.”

DeMarco told lawmakers that in addition to the “heat ray,” military police also wanted a [Long Range Acoustic Device \(LRAD\) “sound cannon,”](#) which blasts eardrum-snapping sound waves at crowds within a narrow angle of attack. The National Guard had neither weapon, but if it had brought them into the city, it would have been a severe escalation, as the guardsmen deployed to DC streets in early June were unarmed.

The ADS has been a controversial weapon since it was first introduced in 2001, and it has been repeatedly blocked from use. After the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, US forces tried to get ahold of the weapon but were denied it, as the system was seen as “a recipe for disaster,” Franz Gayl, [the Marine Corps’s science and technology adviser, told Scientific American](#) for a 2012 article. Similar attempts to get the “heat ray” for use in US prisons in 2010 were rebuffed, and when it was shipped to Afghanistan that same year, it was quickly recalled.

US Customs and Border Protection also sought an ADS device for use at the US-Mexico border in 2018 at the direction of US President Donald Trump, but the request was [blocked by then-Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen](#), according to a report published [just last month by the New York Times](#).

Journalist Spencer Ackerman volunteered to be [blasted with an ADS for a 2012 article in Wired](#). He described the sensation as like standing in front of a blast furnace, even though he was 700 yards away from the truck on which the “heat ray” was mounted.

“When the signal goes out over radio to shoot me, there’s no warning – no flash, no smell, no sound, no round. Suddenly my chest and neck feel like they’ve been exposed to a blast furnace, with a sting thrown in for good measure. I’m getting blasted with 12 joules of energy per square centimeter, in a fairly concentrated blast diameter. I last maybe two seconds of curiosity before



my body takes the controls and yanks me out of the way of the beam. I'm feeling the heat for a good 10 seconds afterward," Ackerman wrote.

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Giuliani Associates Charged With Conspiring to Defraud Investors Via Fraud Insurance Company  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Lev Parnas and David Correia, two associates of US President Donald Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, have been charged by federal prosecutors with conspiring to defraud investors.

On Thursday, prosecutors in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York brought forth a superseding indictment against the duo, accusing them of "conspiring to commit wire fraud in connection with their efforts to raise funds ostensibly for their business, 'Fraud Guarantee,'" [according to a US Department of Justice press release](#).

[The superseding indictment also includes](#) additional campaign finance charges to those filed in October 2019 against Parnas and Correia. There are no new charges against [the others indicted in October, Igor Fruman and Andrey Kukishkin](#).

"As alleged, Lev Parnas and David Correia conspired in a fraud using a company called 'Fraud Guarantee' that purported to insure investors against corporate fraud while in fact, as alleged, they misled investors as to what would be done with their money," Acting US Attorney Audrey Strauss, who filed the complaint, said in the release. "'Fraud Guarantee' takes on a different meaning in light of today's allegations that the company was a vehicle for committing fraud, not insuring against it."

The trial is currently scheduled to begin on February 1, 2021.

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Pentagon Chief Says US Navy Superior to China's Fleet But Ups Expansion Goals Past 355 Ships  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

On Wednesday, US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said that while China's navy is larger than the US Navy, that does not make it superior. However, he also promised to increase the US fleet size past 355 ships, an already-ambitious goal set in 2016.

The People's Liberation Army Navy ([PLAN](#)) [may be 10 ships larger than the US Navy](#) and continuing to grow, but the Pentagon chief doesn't seem too concerned. Esper said at an event hosted by the RAND Corporation earlier this week that the US Navy is still top dog. However, he



also called for increasing the Navy's size even further past its 355-ship goal. The US Navy has just 293 ships at present.

"I want to make clear that China cannot match the United States when it comes to naval power," [Esper said on Wednesday](#).

"Even if we stopped building new ships, it would take the [People's Republic of China] years to close the gap when it comes to our capability on the high seas," he continued. "Ship numbers are important, but they don't tell the whole story. They do not address the types of ships and the capabilities of the vessels being counted; the skill of the crews that operate them; the prowess of the officers that lead them; or the ways in which we fight and sustain them, just to name a few."

"Nonetheless, we must stay ahead; we must retain our overmatch; and we will keep building modern ships to ensure we remain the world's greatest Navy," Esper said, adding that the future Navy "will be [a balanced force of over 355 ships - both manned and unmanned](#) - and will be built in a relevant timeframe and budget-informed manner."

By comparison, China's goals include a 425-ship PLAN by 2030, [according to a report by the China Power project](#) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank. In addition to its larger navy, Beijing has also [invested massively in long-range anti-ship missiles](#) as a counterpoint to the more technologically capable US Navy. [US weapons have yet to match the Chinese arsenal](#), which includes cruise missiles, land-based and air-launched ballistic missiles and even hypersonic weapons.

In 2016, then-candidate Donald Trump pledged to create a 355-ship navy by 2034, but the Navy has struggled not just to secure funding to build new vessels, but to come up with a game plan for meeting the ambitious goal.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday put the problem in no uncertain terms: "We need more money," he told the Surface Navy Association conference in Arlington, Virginia, in January, [according to Defense One](#).

The Navy has been forced to choose between [extremely strict budgetary restrictions](#) and meeting its expansion goals, resulting in it [making plans to slash \\$40 billion in expenditures](#) over a four-year period and delay the construction of hotly demanded vessels, such as the second Virginia-class attack submarine.

The Navy continues to struggle in terms of manpower as well, [with Navy rosters already at least 9,000 sailors short](#) and that number increasing every year. At least part of that is attributable to what a probe of crew attitudes in 2017 [characterized as "catastrophic morale."](#)

"It feels like a race to see which will break down first," one sailor wrote in [a 2017 command climate survey of the US 7th Fleet](#) after two US Navy destroyers collided with civilian vessels, "the ship or it's [sic] crew."

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Western Nations Demand Belarus Stop Blocking Internet Access in Joint Statement  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)



The US joined 28 other countries on Thursday in calling for an end to internet shutdowns in Belarus, where protests against President Alexander Lukashenko's reelection have raged since his August victory. Minsk has accused the US of orchestrating the demonstrations.

The statement was signed by 25 European nations, plus Japan, Australia, the United States and Canada, and called on Lukashenko's administration to "refrain from internet shutdowns and blocking or filtering of services and to respect Belarus' international human rights obligations."

"We, the signatories, are deeply troubled by and condemn the recently reported and ongoing use of partial and complete internet shutdowns, as well as targeted content blocking, by the government of Belarus in the aftermath of the fraudulent 2020 Belarusian presidential elections," [the joint statement reads](#).

"Shutdowns and blocking or filtering of services unjustifiably limit the rights of peaceful assembly and freedoms of association and expression, especially when they lack procedural fairness and transparency. In conjunction with restrictive measures and intimidation employed against opposition candidates and the mass arrests and detentions of Belarusian civil society members and journalists, actions to limit access to the internet, including social media and other digital communication platforms, further erode civic space."

"We will continue to stand with the people of Belarus, who are making their voices heard in spite of these oppressive measures, and we are especially heartened by the critical and central role women are playing in calling for fairness and accountability."

After Lukashenko declared victory in the August 9 elections, winning the 66-year-old a sixth term, the opposition declared the vote illegitimate and said their candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, had actually won.

Countries around the world have taken sides, with [Russia, China, Turkey, Vietnam, Cuba and several other countries recognizing](#) the official results, and the signatories of the above statement, plus several others, rejecting it.

While the former state farm manager [has conceded that he might have](#) "sat in the president's chair a little too long," he has accused the United States of fomenting the unrest that has rocked the country since the August vote and vowed to "protect Belarusians."

"We know who's standing behind all these Telegram channels. It's the Americans. We must all understand that this isn't about Belarus. Their main target is Russia! So stay alert," [Lukashenko told a group of leading Russian media outlets](#) in a joint interview earlier this month.

The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service [arrived at a similar conclusion in a report](#) presented on Wednesday, noting the similarities between the events in Belarus and [those in Venezuela and Syria](#), where the US has also sought to surreptitiously force regime change.

Ironically, [Bloomberg reported on August 28 that Minsk was using technology](#) manufactured by Sandvine Inc., a US company, to block access to parts of the internet. The technology employed is reportedly deep packet inspection equipment, which is used to examine network data to filter out malware and unwanted traffic.

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Photo: Divers Likely Found Wreckage of US Submarine Lost in WWII in Southeast Asia

Divers have sent photos and other evidence from six dives in the Strait of Malacca, south of Phuket, Thailand, to the US Naval History and Heritage Command to verify whether they have found the wreck of a US submarine lost 77 years ago during World War II.

Australian, French and Belgian divers believe they have found the wreck of the USS Grenadier, a 1,475-ton, 307-foot Tambor-class submarine believed to have been lost between the Malay and Thai coasts in 1943.

The sunken wreck was discovered 82 meters underwater in the Strait of Malacca during dives carried out late in 2019 and earlier this year.

According to one of the divers, Lance Horowitz, sonar was used to scan the seafloor in the area for items. When they found one object that was bigger than expected, they looked back into archives to determine what vessel it could be and then dove once again.

"And so we went back looking for clues, nameplate, but we couldn't find any of those," Horowitz explained to the Associated Press.

"And in the end, we took very precise measurements of the submarine and compared those with the naval records. And they're exactly, as per the drawings, the exact same size. So we're pretty confident that it is the USS Grenadier," Horowitz noted.

According to Dr. Robert Neyland, head of the Naval History and Heritage Command's Underwater Archaeology Branch, the organization receives around two to three similar requests from divers per year.

"A complete review, analysis, and documentation may take two months to a year to complete," [Neyland told AP.](#)

The Grenadier departed from Hawaii's Pearl Harbor on February 4, 1942, for its first patrol during World War II. It later sailed in 1943 from Fremantle, Australia, to the Malacca Strait and north into the Andaman Sea.

The submarine was eventually scuttled by crew members near the Malacca Strait after it was bombed by a Japanese plane in 1943.

All 76 people aboard the ship were picked up by a Japanese merchant ship and taken to the Malaysian state of Penang - which was occupied by Japan at the time - where they were questioned and beaten before being sent to prison camps.

"This was an important ship during the war and it was very important to all the crew that served on her," Horowitz recently told AP.

"When you read the book of the survivors, that was, you know, quite an ordeal they went through and to know where she finally lies and rests, I'm sure it's very satisfying for them and their families to be able to have some closure," Horowitz added.

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## 'It Looked Like a Chicken Breast': US Man Finds Brain Wrapped in Foil on Beach - Graphic Photos

A man in Wisconsin recently discovered an animal brain wrapped in aluminum foil while searching for sea glass along Lake Michigan.

James Senda [revealed to local station Fox6](#) that he discovered the brain at Myers Park in Racine County on Tuesday morning. The brain was wrapped up alongside a flower and paper bearing a foreign language, which appeared to be money.

"I don't really know how to explain it, it didn't register ... I was just like, 'What is this? I came across this square package, wrapped in aluminum foil, and around it, it had a pink rubber band,'" Senda told the station.

"Curiosity got to me, so I popped it open and it looked like a chicken breast - kind of. It took a little bit for it to really [register] of what was going on; it was a brain," he added.

Senda was so surprised by his discovery, he even asked some nearby city employees on the beach for their opinion.

"They're like, 'Yeah, that's a brain,'" he recalled.

"I'm personally glad I'm the one that found it instead of somebody else," [Senda told local outlet CBS58](#). "There's kids that play here. I mean, I mentally can take it, I can handle it. But who knows some people may not be able to handle it like I did."

Senda called the police to inform them of his bizarre discovery.

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's office later confirmed that the brain does not belong to a human but rather to an animal. However, it has yet to determine what type of animal the brain came from.

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## Photos: 120,000-Year-Old Human, Animal Footprints Discovered in Saudi Arabia

Researchers have announced the discovery of ancient human and animal footprints dating back more than 120,000 years in the Nefud Desert in northern Saudi Arabia.

According to [AFP](#), the footprints were found at a location that was once a lake in what is now known as the Nefud Desert, a place which was an important gateway between Africa and Eurasia more than 100,000 years ago.

Mathew Stewart of Germany's Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, who was involved in the study, told AFP that the footprints were found during 2017 field work following the erosion of overlying sediments at the lake site.

The footprints were dated using a technique called optical stimulated luminescence, which involves shining light at quartz grains and then measuring the amount of light emitted from them.

"Footprints are a unique form of fossil evidence in that they provide snapshots in time, typically representing a few hours or days, a resolution we tend not to get from other records," Stewart explained.



Seven out of the hundreds of prints found are believed to have been by anatomically modern humans rather than Neanderthals. In addition to human footprints, researchers also found 233 fossils and 369 animal footprints, including 44 elephant footprints and 107 camel footprints, suggesting that the lake was a popular watering hole.

"We know that humans were visiting this lake at the same time these animals were, and, unusually for the area, there's no stone tools," Stewart explains.

"It appears that these people were visiting the lake for water resources and just to forage at the same time as the animals," he added.

The presence of the elephant footprints suggests there were freshwater resources and greenery around the lake and that the Arabian Peninsula was not always characterized by arid deserts.

"The presence of large animals such as elephants and hippos, together with open grasslands and large water resources, may have made northern Arabia a particularly attractive place to humans moving between Africa and Eurasia," Michael Petraglia of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, who was also involved in the research, told AFP.

The research was published Wednesday in the journal Science Advances, according to AFP.

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#### Global Cases of COVID-19 Surpass 30 Million - Johns Hopkins

The total number of global COVID-19 cases has surpassed 30 million, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

Globally, there have been 30,003,378 cases of the virus, and 943,203 people have died as a result.

The [latest data](#) shows that the countries with the highest numbers of cases are the US, India, Brazil, Russia and Peru, in that order. The countries that have suffered the highest numbers of COVID-19 related-deaths are the US, Brazil, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

In the US alone, there have been almost 7 million cases of the virus and almost 200,000 deaths. More than 20 million people across the globe have recovered from the novel coronavirus.

Countries around the world are scrambling to develop a vaccine for the respiratory disease, with Russia becoming the first country to approve such a drug. The vaccine, named Sputnik V, was developed by Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute.

Production of the drug has already started at the Russian company AFK Sistema's Binnopharm pharmaceutical factory, which is expected to produce around 1.5 million doses of the vaccine a year.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said that the United States could have a vaccine for the virus by the middle of October, if the US Food and Drug Administration approves one.

Trump [also said](#) the US will have distributed 100 million vaccine doses by the end of 2020.

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## Israeli Security Forces Accuse Palestinian Woman of Spying, Recruiting for Hezbollah

Israeli authorities have arrested a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem, accusing her of spying for Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

According to Israel's Shin Bet security agency, Yasmin Jaber was arrested last month under suspicion of trying to recruit "Israeli and Palestinian civilians and residents to carry out terrorist activities in Israel," [the Times of Israel reported](#).

Jaber was recruited by Hezbollah during an international youth conference in Lebanon in 2015, the Shin Bet claimed in a Thursday news release.

Jaber is accused of communicating with her Hezbollah handler through coded messages on social media. The Shin Bet also claimed the Palestinian resident was instructed to recruit Arab Israeli operatives for the militant group within Israel.

"This Shin Bet investigation ... is the product of a lengthy intelligence operation to locate those suspected of being recruited by Hezbollah. It is another step in the counterterrorism efforts carried out in the past year against [Iranian] Quds Force and Hezbollah attempts to recruit Israeli Arabs," a senior Shin Bet official said in a statement obtained by the Times of Israel. On Thursday, Jaber's employer, the National Library at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, released a statement expressing surprise that Jaber has been accused of "such grave offenses."

"The security services did not update us over the past weeks as to her arrest. The Library will help in every possible way with the investigation in the event that we are asked to do," a spokesperson for the National Library said.

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## Controversial COVID-19 Testing Advice Posted on US CDC Website Revealed as Not Written by Agency

A controversial recommendation by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released last month about who should be tested for COVID-19 has been revealed to have not been written by CDC scientists and to have been posted to the agency's website over their objections.

The [updated guidance](#) posted on the CDC's website on August 24 stated that it wasn't necessary to test people without COVID-19 symptoms, even if they had been exposed to the virus.

Some Trump administration officials who [spoke with the New York Times](#) said the CDC had written the guidance itself with input from its director, Robert Redfield, but other government officials have now told the Times that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the CDC's parent agency, rewrote the guidelines and posted them on the CDC's website.



“Suggesting that asymptomatic people don’t need testing is just a prescription for community spread and further disease and death,” Dr. Susan Bailey, president of the American Medical Association, commented on the testing guideline in a statement to the New York Times.

The Infectious Diseases Society of America, which works closely with the CDC, [also strongly criticized the recommendation](#).

“We’ve communicated that to the CDC and HHS, but I have not seen any signs that they’re going to change it,” Amanda Jezek, a senior vice president at the organization, told the New York Times.

“That was a doc that came from the top down, from the HHS and the task force,” said a federal official with knowledge of the matter, referring to the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

“That policy does not reflect what many people at the CDC feel should be the policy.”

The document also mentions “testing for COVID-19,” instead of testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Such mistakes suggest that the document was not written by CDC scientists, a senior scientist at the agency who spoke on the condition of anonymity told the Times.

In an interview Thursday with the Times, Adm. Brett Giroir, the administration’s testing coordinator and an assistant secretary at the HHS, said that the CDC wrote the original guidance, but that he “coordinated editing and input from the scientific and medical members of the task force.”

The draft was revised around 20 times over the course of a month, with comments from Redfield and Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Anthony Fauci, alongside others.

However, Giroir was not able to explain why the recommendations did not undergo the appropriate scientific review by the CDC before they were posted.

“I think you have to ask Dr. Redfield about that. That certainly was not any direction from me whatsoever,” he said.

During a [congressional hearing Wednesday](#), Redfield said that the agency is revising the guidelines. A federal official familiar with the matter said that the revision was being completed by a CDC scientist but was being edited by the HHS and White House Coronavirus Task Force. A federal official also told the Times that a new version of the guidance expected to be posted on Friday has not been approved by the CDC’s internal review for scientific documents and is currently being evaluated by HHS officials.

In addition, a document titled [“The Importance of Reopening America’s Schools this Fall”](#) was also published on the CDC website in June and strays from the CDC’s usual neutral tone, officials told the Times.

Last week, current and former senior health officials also revealed that political appointees at the HHS have asked the CDC to revise, delay and meddle with weekly COVID-19 reports that did not paint the Trump administration in a positive light.

According to the Times, Redfield has been described by CDC employees and outsiders as a leader who is too weak to protect the agency from the Trump administration’s meddling, tarnishing its reputation among the public.

“It feels like a setup,” one CDC scientist noted.

“CDC scientists are running scared,” said Scott Becker, chief executive of the Association of Public Health Laboratories.



“There’s nothing they can do that gets them out of this blame game.”

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False Election Hacking Allegations Prompt US State to Contradict Russiagate Narrative -  
Journo  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Historian and journalist Gareth Porter claims in his latest piece that further doubt is being cast on the Russiagate narrative, as a recent article in an independent Russian newspaper prompted the government of Michigan to contradict previous assertions of Moscow-ordered hackings targeting US election affairs.

Porter joined Radio Sputnik’s [By Any Means Necessary](#) on Wednesday and first clarified to hosts Sean Blackmon and Jacquie Luqman that his latest [article featured in The Grayzone](#) is not the first time he has written about the false Russiagate narrative and how the American public has been misled following special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation.

The Senate Intelligence Committee report disseminated by the New York Times and other mainstream Western outlets claimed that voter registration databases were among the election infrastructure attacked in all 50 American states by Russian hackers in 2016.

According to the investigation footnotes, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defined election infrastructure as “storage facilities, polling places, and centralized vote tabulation locations used to support the election process.” Furthermore, the [Russia investigation found](#) voter registration databases were “not as secure as they should have been.”

The report made mention of Michael Daniel, who from June 2012 to January 2017 served as special assistant to President Barack Obama and cybersecurity coordinator for the National Security Council, a role that was later eliminated through the efforts of [ex-national security adviser John Bolton](#). Daniel also believed that Russian hackers had targeted election infrastructure in all 50 US states.

Citing a [September 1 report](#) in Russian independent newspaper Kommersant, Porter’s piece highlighted that “a user on a dark web Forum known as Gorka9 offered free access to databases containing the information of 7.6 million Michigan voters, along with the state voter databases of Connecticut, Arkansas, Florida and North Carolina.”

This prompted Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson’s office to release a statement clarifying that the database containing the information of some 7.6 million individuals had not been hacked, as such information is obtainable via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

Investigations into the data offered on Gorka9 found that it was already publicly available, [according to NBC News](#). The fact that such information can already be found on the internet suggests the Russian government wouldn’t have much motive to hack official databases to get it, and the FBI and DHS noted that “a lot of voter registration data is publicly available or easily purchased.”



However, Benson's announcement came about after reporters, such as GQ correspondent Julia Ioffe, began to spread allegations of Russian election interference.

"Russian journalists have discovered data from Michigan voter data rolls - including the personal info of 7.6 million Michigan voters - on a Russian hackers' platform. It also includes voter info from other swing states, including Florida and NC," she alleged in a series of [since-deleted tweets](#) posted on September 1.

However, she added, "As some people have correctly pointed out, this is publicly available information. A lot of it has been floating around for a while. It's just unclear what these hackers are using it for, other than scamming the State Department."

The DHS [has claimed](#) Russian "cyber operations targeting election infrastructure could be intended or used to undermine public confidence in electoral processes and potentially the outcome," Porter argued that the entire Russiagate narrative ignores the "fundamental reality that criminal hackers have been hacking into these state databases ... in order to get personal information."

"Why?" he asked. "Because they sell it to scammers."

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Graphic Video: US Cop Charged With Felony After Commanding K-9 to Repeatedly Bite Suspect  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

An officer with Utah's Salt Lake City Police Department (SLCPD) is facing 15 years behind bars after body camera footage from April showed him ordering a K-9 dog to bite a man who was not resisting arrest and was complying with orders.

Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill announced on Wednesday that prosecutors believe Officer Nickolas Pearce used "unlawful force" in the April 24 arrest of 36-year-old Jeffery Ryans and have since charged the cop with aggravated assault, a second-degree felony.

"He certainly wasn't posing an imminent threat of violence or harm to anyone and he certainly wasn't concealed. He was fenced in an area and was being compliant," Gill said of Ryans on September 16, as reported by [the Salt Lake Tribune](#).

Ryans "wasn't resisting arrest," he added.

Body camera footage republished by the Tribune shows the moment in question.

"Get on the ground!" Pearce is heard yelling. "Get on the ground, or you're going to get bit!"

Pearce immediately complies, gets on his knees and places his hands in the air. It's then that Pearce orders the dog to "hit," a command telling the K-9 to bite the 36-year-old.

Be advised, the footage below contains scenes some audiences may find offensive.

Pearce repeats the "hit" order and is overheard saying "good boy" to the dog as Ryans screams in agony.

"Why are you guys doing this?" the 36-year-old asks between his screams.



The SLCPD [published a news release](#) on Wednesday confirming knowledge of the criminal charges leveled against Pearce, as well as an “independent investigation conducted by the City’s Civilian Review Board.”

“The Department takes the District Attorney’s decision and the Civilian Review Board’s findings very seriously. Both will be evaluated and taken into account as the Department is finalizing its Internal Affairs investigation,” the department noted.

“If Internal Affairs finds that Officer Pearce committed a policy violation, the Chief’s Office will follow the disciplinary process required under state and federal law. This can take some time, but we will carry this out as expediently as possible to bring a prompt conclusion to this matter.” Pearce and other officers were initially called to the house to arrest Ryans for violating a protective order that had been filed in December 2019.

Ryans maintains that he and his wife, the one who filed the protective order, had worked things out and that he had been living at the house for some time before the April 24 encounter.

“I wasn’t running,” he recalled to the Tribune. “I wasn’t fighting. I was just cooperating. We’ve been through this. We’ve seen this. Always cooperate with the police, no matter what.”

SLCPD Deputy Chief Jeff Kendrick [told “CBS This Morning”](#) that “domestic violence” and related incidents “are some of the most dangerous calls that [officers] respond to” and that K-9s are generally brought along to assist.

The city has since prohibited the force from using K-9s, pending the results of policy reviews and Ryans’ case.

A probable cause statement provided to CBS News cited Ryans’ medical records and detailed that he sustained “two lacerations described as approximately 4 inch wide by 3 inch long and approximately 5 inch long by 1 inch wide.” The injuries resulted in “prolonged loss of the use of his left leg following surgery.”

“Complications resulting from the dog bites have resulted in protracted impairment of his leg and permanent disfigurement of the leg due to visible scarring from the dog bites,” the document read.

Ryans, who has already undergone several surgeries, revealed to “CBS This Morning” that doctors have said amputation of his leg is still a possibility.

Pearce, if convicted, faces up to 15 years behind bars.

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US Judge Temporarily Blocks USPS Policies Delaying Mail Ahead of 2020 Election  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

A federal judge in the US state of Washington has granted a preliminary injunction to block recent United States Postal Service (USPS) changes that have slowed down mail services ahead of the November presidential election.



Stanley Bastian, chief judge of the US District Court for the Eastern District of Washington, ruled on Thursday that the USPS would have to cease carrying out a number of operational changes that may threaten critical mail delivery.

"The states have demonstrated the defendants are involved in a politically motivated attack on the efficiency of the Postal Service," Bastian said, [as reported by the Associated Press](#). He added that the changes created "a substantial possibility many voters will be disenfranchised."

A [September 10 release](#) by the Washington State Office of Attorney General Bob Ferguson noted the [motion for preliminary injunction](#) called for the immediate halting of "the Postal Service's 'leave mail behind' policy, where postal trucks are required to leave at specified times, regardless if there is mail still to be loaded."

The Washington-filed injunction represented the state of Washington, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin.

"Nationwide relief is also needed to provide complete relief to the Plaintiff States for the procedural harm they have suffered: deprivation of the right to comment on broad-based changes before implementation," Ferguson wrote in the court filing.

"Allowing these 'transformative changes' to take effect in much of the country while the [Postal Regulatory Commission] considers whether they should be allowed to take effect would render the legally required notice and comment process a farce."

Prior the states' joint legal action, US Postmaster General Louis [DeJoy came under fire](#) for not consulting Congress before carrying out a number of so-called operational efficiencies, including the alleged ordered removal and movement of blue USPS mailboxes.

DeJoy denied lawmakers' claims during his appearance before the House Oversight Committee in late August.

"First, I did not direct the removal of blue collection boxes or the removal of mail processing equipment," he claimed. "Second, I did not direct a cutback on hours at any of our post offices. And finally, I did not direct the elimination or any cutback in overtime."

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Moderna Will Likely Announce Efficacy of COVID-19 Vaccine in November - CEO  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

The CEO of Moderna, the first company to conduct large-scale human trials of a COVID-19 vaccine candidate in the US, says the firm will likely have enough data to announce in November whether its novel coronavirus vaccine is sufficiently effective for broader use. CEO Stephane Bancel revealed during a Thursday [interview on CNBC's "Squawk Box"](#) that Moderna anticipates a "base plan for efficacy" to be released in November, as the company has been saying for "many months."



"If the infection rate in the country were to slow down in the next weeks, it could potentially be pushed out in a worst-case scenario in December," he added.

The CEO's comments follow US President Donald Trump's [repeated assertions](#) that a vaccine will be available during October. Trump did not specify which vaccine effort he believed would be cleared by the US Food and Drug Administration.

Bancel explained to CNBC that it is unlikely that Moderna will have enough data to make an accurate assertion about the vaccine's efficacy by October.

The company's [latest news release](#) detailed that, as of September 16, the "Phase 3 COVE [Coronavirus Efficacy] study" has enrolled 25,296 participants out of the total 30,000 volunteers needed. Of the active participants, 10,025 have received a second dose of the vaccine.

The company has posted the [study's protocol](#) online "to provide additional transparency."

Robert Redfield, director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), testified before a [Senate Appropriations Committee panel](#) earlier this week and [argued that he expects](#) limited COVID-19 vaccinations to begin in November or December.

He went on to clarify that as for when the vaccine will likely be available to the greater US population, "we're probably looking at third ... late second quarter, third quarter 2021."

US President Donald Trump countered the CDC director's statement later that day, asserting that the medical expert was "confused" and had made a "mistake" about the vaccine timeline. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla [told CNBC](#) on Monday that it is likely that his company will have a "conclusive efficacy result of our Phase 3 [trial] before the end of October."

He clarified that he was not providing "official dates" and that results could come in "a week earlier" or "a week later," during the week of the US presidential election.

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Acting Bolivian President Jeanine Añez Withdraws From Upcoming Presidential Election  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Bolivia's interim president Jeanine Añez has announced via social media that her campaign has withdrawn from the upcoming October 18 election.

"Today I put aside my candidacy in homage to freedom and democracy," the conservative interim president said in a translated tweet on Thursday.

"The stakes in this election are not small. Really, democracy is at stake in Bolivia."

[Reuters reported](#) that her withdrawal from the October 18 ballot came amid the release of opinion polls which showed her lagging [behind candidate Luis Arce](#), who belongs to the Movement for Socialism party of ousted Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Carlos Mesa, a journalist-turned-candidate of the centrist Civic Community party, is ranked second in the polls.

Shortly after Morales secured a 10-point victory in the October 2019 presidential election, the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Bolivia [issued a statement](#) arguing the results may not be accurate due to a "hard-to-explain change in the trend of the preliminary results."

A [follow-up news release](#) from election auditors alleged confirmation of OAS suspicions, [noting the discovery](#) of "serious security flaws."

This news led to the ousting of Morales to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the [assumption of his seat by Añez](#), Bolivia's second vice president of the senate.

Añez appeared in the presidential palace on November 12 and vowed to "take all the necessary measures to bring peace to the country" and carry out a peaceful transition.

However, Añez-appointed election authorities called for the elections to be pushed back a total of three times, eventually deciding on October 18, following a late July announcement.

The Washington Post, which referred to Morales' ousting in November 2019 as [simple "resignation."](#) revealed [analysis in late February](#) that [plainly stated](#) "there isn't statistical support for the claims of vote fraud" and, overall, "the OAS's statistical analysis and conclusions would appear deeply flawed."

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Vaccine Virtuoso - Cartoon

US President Donald Trump is trashing statements made by his very own Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director in Senate testimony given Wednesday regarding the anticipated delivery date of a COVID-19 vaccine.

During a Wednesday news conference, Trump told reporters that CDC Director Robert Redfield was ["confused" and that he had made a "mistake"](#) when he [said during his testimony](#) that a vaccine likely wouldn't be widely available to the public until the summer of 2021. Trump then claimed that "under no circumstance" would a vaccine take so long, noting that a drug could instead be ready by as soon as mid-October, with distribution starting "immediately." White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said on Thursday that Redfield was not among "those closest to the process" of planning the development and distribution of a vaccine, [The Hill reported](#). That seems like the sort of thing in which the CDC director ought to be deeply involved.